

## Home Circle

### A Tragedy in Three Parts

#### PART I.—The Bonnet

A bit of foundation as big as your hand ;  
Bows of ribbon and lace ;  
Wire sufficient to make them stand ;  
A handful of roses, a velvet band—  
It lacks but one crowning grace.

#### PART II.—The Bird

A chirp, a twitter, a flash of wings,  
Four wide-open mouths in a nest ;  
From morning till night she brings and brings  
For growing birds, they are hungry things—  
Aye ! hungry things at the best.

The crack of a rifle, a shot well sped ;  
A crimson stain on the grass ;  
Four hungry birds in a nest unfed—  
Ah ! well, we will leave the rest unsaid ;  
Some things it were better to pass.

#### PART III.—The Wearer

The lady has surely a beautiful face,  
She has surely a queenly air ;  
The bonnet had flowers and ribbon and lace ;  
But the bird has added the crowning grace—  
It is really a charming affair.

Is the love of a bonnet supreme over all,  
In a lady so faultlessly fair ?  
The Father takes heed when the sparrows fall,  
He hears when the starving nestlings call—  
Can a tender woman not care ?

—Anon, in *Current Literature*.

#### A Little Soldier

Union Signal.

"Mamma, please tell us a story," coaxed Dolly.

"A story," echoed Dale, "and about soldiers, too."

"Uncle Charlie is a soldier," put in Dolly. "Just think how nice he looks, Dale, with those shiny buttons on his coat. I wish you'd be one when you get growed up."

"I'm going to," said Dale shaking his head emphatically, "mayn't I, mamma?"

"You need not wait until you are grown," she answered him. "You can begin right away. Uncle Charlie began when he was a little boy no older than you."

"And can I have a flag, and a drum, and a soldier cap and—"

"There! there!" laughed mamma, "is that all that makes a soldier?"

"No," answered Dolly, "a soldier must be brave."

"Uncle Charlie is brave," declared Dale. "You know, mamma, you told me yourself that he carried the flag clear up that awful Jooang (Juan) hill."

"I didn't mean that," said mamma, turning pale and drawing Dale closer to her. "What was it Uncle Charlie said that a soldier must first learn?"

"To mind," cried Dolly and Dale together.

"Yes, to obey," said mamma, "and Uncle Charlie began learning that when he was a very little boy. I'll tell you a story about him. When we were little folks, your Uncle Charlie and I, we lived on a farm far away from any town. There was a little brook that ran through the fields below the barn, and here we used to play, hour after hour, sometimes with the pretty pebbles on the

sand, and sometimes sailing little boats on the water. The next field belonged to a neighbor, and he kept a great many cows in there. There was an old black cow who disliked children, and who used to come close to the fence and look at us as we played. We were afraid of her, she looked so cross as she shook her head at us, and we were glad that a high rail fence separated us. One day Charlie was playing there alone; I was at school and our mamma, your grandma, was busy at work.

"All at once she thought of her little boy at play by the brook. 'I'll call him,' she said, 'he has been down there a long time.' So she went down the path to the barn, and could see his curly head through the bushes. She saw something else as well. In the far corner of the lot where the cows were, part of the fence was down, and old Black, her head up and eyes staring, was making for the brook and our little boy.

"What could be done? Grandma could not get to him as quickly as he could come to her. She must not frighten him. He must not know that behind him was cross old black. She called, 'Charlie! Charlie! Come here to mamma, quick!' Now Charlie was digging such a big well; he had made a shovel out of a piece of wood, and was using it in the wet sand. He did not want to leave. What do you think he did?"

"What?" cried both children excitedly.

"Do you always come when I call?" asked mamma.

"No—not—always," confessed Dale, hanging his head.

"I will tell you what Uncle Charlie did. He dropped his little shovel and started on a run toward his mamma who was standing at the gate.

"Hurry, that's my good boy," she called to him, trying to keep the tremble out of her voice, and holding the gate wide open, for old Black was in the field now and coming, coming, coming on a steady run. Charlie never looked behind him, tho, and his little legs almost flew over the ground. His mamma ran to meet him, caught him in her arms and fastened the gate tight. Old Black reached it soon after, but Charlie was safe.

"My little boy! my little boy!" cried his mamma, "what would have happened if you had not come when I called you?"

#### A Moving Sermon

Yes, the preacher was very gifted, and his preaching very affective.

She heard it as if in a dream. Life had gone so hardly of late, for experience had made her open-eyed, and with the open vision had come a drying up of the old sources of joy. She had loved, and love disappointed her, and then she tried to hate; but the hate soon burnt itself out, when it had said words there was no recalling, and built up barriers difficult to destroy; and the woman heart within her was fain to do the very thing the preacher urged.

He heard the words and something tugged at his heart-strings, though they were hard to

move. He had grown callous since his great mistake, the mistake which had let so much discord into their home life. It was all his fault! He knew it, owned it, and was troubled about it—troubled with eye-drooping, glance-shifting shame. But she was so hard concerning it, and ever since had never thought his thoughts, spoken his language, seen with his eyes, or walked his ways. They were apart, and as he looked before him, there was the road to get lonelier, and the life drearier! But he had thought so often in this way that at last it seemed the thing that had been always.

And then the preacher spoke. He started, she started, and soul to soul they gazed at one another. Never a word said he, never a word said she, but the walls came down which stood between them, and across their ruins their hearts leaped to kiss.

Who preached the sermon?

Only a child, and a little one at that.

What was the sermon?

"Papa, tiss baby! Mamma, tiss baby! Papa—tiss—mamma!"

And they did.

#### A Little Boy's Self-Sacrifice

The Church Militant.

We will call him Jack Smith, because that was not his name, but he had a real name, because he was a real boy.

Of all the Christmas and birthday toys which he had received, that which delighted Jack's heart most, was the stuffed figure of a little black, wooly dog, with the reddest of red lips, and a red ribbon around his neck. "Wooly" was a good dog; he never bit, and he never disturbed the house by barking or snarling, and it cost absolutely nothing to feed him. The only fault to be found with him was, as it seemed to Jack, his stupid disobedience. He would not move in any direction whatsoever, even when Jack told him to. Still Jack loved him passionately.

One springtime came when a circular reached the house in Jack's mother's mail, asking for gifts of toys for the amusement of poor, sick little children in a seaside home. Jack thought of a number of toys which he was tired of, and was very willing to give them to the seaside home. But a special appeal was made for something to amuse a little crippled boy who was expected at the home, and Jack felt that he had heard a new call to self-sacrifice. He could not get rid of the thought that if Wooly was such a delight to him, it would also supremely delight the little cripple. But the very thought of giving up his dear Wooly was anguish. No, he could not do it. And for fear some one should think he could do it and not care much, he took Wooly to bed with him, and laid him beside the pillow, where he could touch him if he awoke during the night, and assure himself that it was still there. And then he could see Wooly as soon as he awoke in the morning.

Still, the thought that it would, somehow, be a kind act that would please God if he gave up Wooly to the crippled boy, grew on